

# **POLICY BULLETIN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS**

**NSLP 07-08**

**March 13, 2008**

**SUBJECT: Use of Vending Machines in the School Meals Programs**

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## **Questions and Answers on Vending in the School Meal Programs**

**1) Are reimbursable meals offered through vending machines subject to the Offer vs. Serve (OVS) provisions?**

Yes, as stated in the SP-03-2007 memo, vending machines offering reimbursable meals are subject to the same procedures, menu planning requirements, competitive food rules, and OVS requirements that are applicable to meals offered on a service line with a cashier.

**2) May meals vended after any OVS configurations run out be reimbursed?**

Once a vending machine can no longer dispense a complete reimbursable meal it must no longer be available for the purpose of serving reimbursable meals. A "complete meal" means a meal containing all planned components/menu items, before the exclusion of components/menu items permitted by OVS.

**3) In a school offering OVS, does predetermination of menu selections in a vending machine (resulting in a less than complete set of choices while others may have a different set of choices), undermine the intent of the OVS requirement?**

No, this is similar to multiple service lines in which every line may not offer all items. At a minimum, any vending machine used as part of the school meals programs must be able to dispense a complete meal. We encourage schools to stock as wide a variety as possible for students utilizing these machines, but understand that the choices may not be as robust as those offered in a traditional line.

**4) How is free, reduced price or paid eligibility tracked when using a vending machine?**

In order to distribute reimbursable meals, the school must be able to determine the student's eligibility status, whether they are using a vending machine or a traditional serving line. How this is done would be determined by the school district's point of service system and procedures.

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**5) Do vending machines need to allow a student to add money on to his/her account and/or pay the difference between the account balance and the price of the item to be purchased, if the student doesn't have sufficient funds in the account?**

Vending machines do not have to accept money from students, but there does have to be a mechanism for the student who has money to participate in the program. This mechanism could be a student providing the money to a school representative who adds the money to the students' account so that it is available for the meal; or assuring that the student has access to a traditional meal line that accepts cash.

**6) Are vending machines limited to the same time restrictions as other types of lunch service(10 AM to 2 PM) when serving lunch under the NSLP?**

Yes

**7) Do the identifiers (name, ID number, biometric, cashier, etc) for a vending machine need to be the same as in a traditional line?**

The reimbursable school meal vending machine must have the same number of identifiers as the traditional line, but the identifiers do not have to be the same ones. For example a cashier may be an identifier in a traditional line, along with a pin number. The vending machine used in the school would need equivalent identifiers, but they could be a biometric check and a pin number.